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PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS IN FRENCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE.

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THE PLACEMENT BATTERY CONSISTS OF TWO TESTS FROM THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD (READING AND LISTENING), A GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY TEST, AND AN ORAL INTERVIEW. FRESHMEN WHO SCORE WITHIN A CERTAIN RANGE ON THESE TESTS ARE PLACED IN SECOND YEAR INTENSIVE FRENCH (TWO CLASS PERIODS A DAY). PREREQUISITE FOR THE THIRD YEAR COURSE IS NOT THE COMPLETION OF ELEMENTARY COURSES, BUT PROFICIENCY, AS REFLECTED IN A HIGHER RANGE OF SCORES ON THE PRECEDING TESTS. SECOND YEAR STUDENTS WHO HAVE DONE WELL MAY TAKE THE PROFICIENCY BATTERY AT MIDSEMESTER. IF THEY PASS, THEY ENTER THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRD-YEAR COURSE, AND USE THEIR ADDITIONAL TIME (THE THIRD-YEAR COURSE MEETS ONLY ONCE DAILY) TO MAKE UP THE FIRST SEMESTER'S WORK ON A TUTORIAL BASIS. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURIER," NUMBER 39, JANUARY 1968, PAGES 19-22. (AF)

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PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS IN FRENCH
at the University of Michigan Residential College

In August, 1967, on the basis of a placement battery consisting of two CEEB examinations (reading and listening), one grammar proficiency test of our own design, and an oral interview, forty Residential College freshmen were placed in second year intensive French. The second year intensive course consists of two class periods a day: a lecture in the afternoon and smaller recitation sections in the morning. Students also spend time outside of class working in the language laboratory and participating in the language tables at lunch and dinner. The lecture and recitation sections are conducted entirely in French.

The criteria for placement into second year French, while somewhat erratic at the beginning of the semester, have now become stabilized as a result of subsequent testing sessions. These criteria are:

CEEB Reading Test:	475-599
CEEB Listening Test:	450-599
Grammar Proficiency:	30-40/60 (approximate)
Oral Interview:	Demonstrated ability to discuss in French simple everyday subjects and adequate comprehension for classes taught only in the target language.

It is the policy of the Language Program of the Residential College to require a third year course above and beyond the normal elementary units of work required by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Unlike the parent college, however, this course, which is called "Readings In_____", has as its prerequisite, not the completion of a given number of courses in the elementary language, but rather the attainment of proficiency. Proficiency is measured by the instruments described above. In the case of French, then, a student can be said to have attained proficiency in the language when he has gotten scores above the following:

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CEEB Reading Test:	600
CEEB Listening Test:	600
Grammer Proficiency:	40/60 (approximate)
Oral Interview:	Demonstrated ability to handle the language in most social situations, and to be able to discuss works of literature which he has read.

The proficiency level in speaking as measured by the Oral Interview is, indeed, somewhat arbitrary; it is felt, nevertheless, that this one subjective part of the battery is offset by the high standards required for proficiency in the other three parts. No student at this writing has failed the speaking part of the battery while having passed the other three parts.

In view of the emphasis of our program on proficiency rather than on completed credit hours or courses, we make it possible for second year students to take the proficiency battery at midpoint in the semester. If they should pass the battery and thus attain proficiency, they are able to move immediately into the third year course already in progress. This changing of courses at midpoint in the semester is theoretically possible because the student is moving from a double (two units of work) to a single course. Hence he can use the additional time, which his program allows, to make up the work which the third year course has already completed. His make-up work is supervised outside of class on a tutorial basis by our staff.

At midpoint in the semester it was decided by Mrs. Marcia Vitiello, supervisor of the second year courses at the Residential College, that twenty of the best students in the class should attempt to pass the proficiency battery. While many of the students had made remarkable progress in the CEEB tests, only six of the twenty students attained scores high enough on all parts of the battery to allow them to go on to the third year course. The following tables show the scores in August and October for the six students who attained proficiency at midpoint in the semester:

CEEB Reading

	August	October	Difference
S_1	640	713	+73
S_2	660	697	+37
S_3	590	675	+85
S_4	*	616	*
S_5	610	697	+87
S_6	590	751	+161

*Data incomplete

CEEB Listening

	August	October	Difference
S_1	470	724	+254
S_2	610	773	+163
S_3	640	753	+113
S_4	*	733	*
S_5	650	800	+150
S_6	660	783	+123

Grammar Proficiency

	August	October	Difference
S_1	45	52	+8
S_2	36	48	+12
S_3	21	47	+26
S_4	19	41	+22
S_5	36	40	+4
S_6	33	40	+7

The average progress made by the six students on the three parts of the battery is as follows:

CEEB Reading: 88
CEEB Listening: 160
Grammar Proficiency: 13

In addition we can provide the following background data on the students:

	Number of years H. S. French	Time Lapse
S_1	3	none
S_2	3	none
S_3	2	1 semester
S_4	2.5	3 semesters
S_5	4	none
S_6	3	none

By using a four-skill battery of test, we emphasized proficiency as a threshold to more language study rather than as an end-point. Readings in French, (core 320) which the 6 students joined in mid-October, will now be described very briefly.

The following materials were read by the students and discussed intensively in class:

1. Bergier and Pauwels, Le Matin des Magiciens. (Harper)
2. Baudelaire, Chant d'Automne and Le Voyage.
3. Valery, La Dormeuse and Eluard Une et Plusieurs.
4. Camus, La Chute. (NRF)
5. Ionesco, Le Roi se Meurt. (NRF)
6. Elie Faure, l'Art Moderne. (NRF poche)

In addition we used an advanced conversational review grammar with laboratory tapes (But ideally there should be no more language study as such at this level). All discussions were in French. Thirteen 4-5 page papers were assigned. Enrollment jumped from 12 to 18 when S_1 - S_6 joined up in mid-October. All six new students completed all the work and passed the course so that they accumulated three course units in one semester (two automatically given for passing proficiency, one for core 320).

It is extremely heartening for us to note that students can, with the proper method and motivation, make sufficient progress to attain proficiency within a period of time as short as two months. We felt that under the influence of continuing experimentation and growth, more and more students will be able to attain proficiency in a short time, and thus will be able to continue their education using two languages as tools for learning.

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